

# **Social Studies' Best Practices**

Summary Statement 2006:

## **I. Curriculum**

Regarding the design of curriculum in the social studies, and based on the best available research, we believe that adopted curriculum should...

- A. establish clear standards, giving examples and guidance to new and veteran educators**
- B. highlight skills such as chronological thinking and analysis of historic and contemporary issues**
- C. help students to learn about exemplary citizens of the past and present**
- D. follow common pacing to assure equity in delivery of standards**
- E. require engagement in higher-levels of thinking and questioning**
- F. focus on selected themes for in-depth study, balancing depth versus breadth**
- G. develop skills and abilities which empower students to make competent decisions as adults**
- H. facilitate the establishment of a constructive, interactive classroom**
- I. permit students to make some choices about his/her learning**
- J. establish richer, more challenging experiences for younger learners**
- K. promote civic competence and sense of stewardship**

## **II. Student Expectations**

Regarding expectations for our students in social studies, and based on the best available research, we believe that students should...

- A. go beyond literal understanding to analysis and interpretation of information**
- B. display respect for the dignity and rights of others**
- C. demonstrate an understanding of democratic principles, by participating in civic affairs**
- E. have both academic and practical knowledge of civics**
- D. develop historic and critical thinking; raise questions and evaluate solutions**
- E. compare different types of evidence and draw conclusions from them**
- F. investigate and evaluate historic and contemporary issues**
- G. read primary and secondary sources with comprehension**
- H. be responsible for active reading and engagement in the textbook**
- I. thoughtfully connect what they learn to previous experiences**
- J. establish their own goals and take ownership of learning**
- K. develop and practice autonomous, rationale thinking**

## **III. Instructional Strategies**

Regarding the implementation of effective teaching strategies, and based on the best available research, we believe that social studies teachers should use instructional strategies which...

- A. emphasize student-centered rather than teacher-centered experiences**
- B. assist students to monitor their own learning**
- C. are varied and delivered in shorter time periods**
- D. require students to compile and analyze data beyond the textbooks**
- E. require writing skills as applied in journals, essays, and brief writing experiences**
- F. engage students in cooperative learning and assessments**
- G. focus on integrative, active inquisition**
- H. plan for sequences of questions, allowing for reflective discussion**
- I. invite students to engage in sustained dialogue, demanding well-reasoned argument**
- J. require students to process new information themselves through effective note-taking, summarization, analysis and application**

- K. create and utilize non-linguistic representations of information and concepts, including visuals, graphs, maps, and charts**
- L. utilize developmentally appropriate kinesthetic experiences to reinforce learning**
- M. create a flexible, creative environment**

#### **IV. Instructional Resources**

Regarding the selection of meaningful instructional resources, and based on the best available research, we believe that social studies teachers should use resources which...

- A. are adopted by classroom teachers**
- B. can be applied to units designed and shared by collegial groups of educators**
- C. are interactive and challenging**
- D. activate prior learning and make connections**
- E. require students to marshal firsthand evidence**
- F. utilize the textbook as one of many interpretations of factual events**
- G. utilize and apply concepts from politics, economics, and geography in the context of public life**
- H. include teacher and student-created supplements**
- I. raise questions and analyze alternatives**
- J. include library, museum collections, eyewitness accounts, documentaries, dramatic representations, and analysis of statistical data**
- K. highlight interdisciplinary connections.**

#### **V. Assessing Learning**

Regarding measurement of student learning in the social studies, and based on the best available research, we believe that assessments should...

- A. be administered formally, as well as informally, on a frequent basis**
- B. measure individual learning using both formative and summative formats**
- D. be utilized to plan for and adjust instruction**
- E. measure pre-established process and content standards**
- F. measure civic skills necessary for all American citizens**
- G. be designed locally by groups of teachers working collaboratively together**
- H. include authentic, performance-based measurements, such as portfolios, essays, research projects, etc.**
- I. require students to support interpretations with evidence**
- J. provide data needed to measure program effectiveness**
- K. provide feedback necessary to adopt appropriate resources and plan for adequate professional development**
- L. include firsthand observations of effective classroom instruction**

#### **Citation of Sources:**

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